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# LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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## **Make Sure You're Ready for the Digital TV Transition** by Senator Larry Craig

While all Idahoans are cheering on our ranked Boise State Broncos and looking forward to the March Madness basketball tournament, now is a good time to make sure we're prepared for the Digital TV (DTV) Transition coming in February so we won't miss a minute of these or any other of our favorite television entertainment programming.

By law, full-power television stations nationwide must stop using the old method of transmitting TV signals, known as analog, and begin broadcasting exclusively in a digital format on February 17, 2009. Why? In 1996 the U.S. Congress recognized the improved flexibility and efficiency of DTV's innovative technology to produce crystal-clear pictures and sound. After hearings and debate, Congress authorized the distribution of an additional digital broadcast channel to every broadcast TV station that the station could start, while simultaneously continuing its analog broadcast channel most folks now receive.

Then came 9/11. One of the many lessons we learned after the terrorists' attacks of September 11, 2001, was that our nation's overloaded communications airwaves prevented law enforcement officers and first responders from communicating with each other. As a solution, Congress revisited the analog/digital debate. In 2005, it enacted legislation to free up the analog airwaves for the use of law enforcement and first responders and mandated that February 17, 2009, would be the last day for full-power stations to broadcast in analog. After February 17, television stations would broadcast only in digital.

The DTV Transition means that millions of households that receive broadcast TV through antennas risk losing reception unless they upgrade and take steps to receive a digital signal. According to the Federal Communications Commission, Boise alone has more than 100,000 households that rely solely on over-the-air television signals which will cease on February 17.

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Televisions connected to cable, satellite or other pay services, and televisions purchased within the past two years and containing built-in digital tuners should continue to work after the transition. But older televisions using antennas to receive over-the-air programming will lose reception on February 17.

What’s the solution? Idahoans with an analog television that uses an antenna will need to obtain a digital-to-analog converter box to continue watching broadcast television on that set. The converter box will also enable you to see any additional multicast digital programming your local stations offer.

To help consumers make the DTV transition, the federal government, through the Department of Commerce, has established the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program. Every Idaho household is eligible to receive up to two coupons – worth \$40 each – toward the purchase of eligible digital-to-analog converter boxes sold at participating consumer electronics retailers. Manufacturers estimate that digital-to-analog converter boxes will sell from \$40 to \$70 each, a one-time cost.

Idahoans looking for more information on the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program may visit [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) or call 1-888-388-2009 (voice) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY). There are many sources of information about the digital transition, but one of the best is the government’s web site [www.dtv.gov](http://www.dtv.gov).

Digital television is available today, so there’s no need to wait until after February 17 to watch it. Start making your plans for the transition today.